**[Cutting Trees In The Amazon Triggers A Jump In Malaria](http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2010/06/16/127882027/cutting-trees-in-the-amazon-triggers-a-jump-in-malaria-cases)**

Categories: [Infectious Disease](http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=126568156), [International Health](http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=126567816), [Research](http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=126567633), [Public Health & Prevention](http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=126567402)

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by Chao Deng

If a tree falls in the Amazon, does it matter to malaria-carrying mosquitoes?

Some mosquitoes that transmit malaria don't like the rain forest much.

Yes, say researchers from the University of Wisonsin-Madison. They found that a 4 percent reduction in rain forest led to a 50 percent increase in malaria cases in the western tip of Brazil, even a decade after the trees were cut.

The team had a [hunch](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5127962) that deforestation was creating an ideal habitat for a particular species of mosquito, [*Anopheles darlingi*](http://www.icb.usp.br/~marcelcp/Anophelesdarlingi.htm)*.* The bug breeds in partially sunlit areas and carries the malaria parasite from human to human.

Using data from the Brazilian Ministry of Health as well as research from a Brazilian graduate student, the American team found that variables like a patient's age and access to care weren't as important as deforestation when it came to predicting the risk of malaria.

The results were just [published](http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/16/7/pdfs/09-1785.pdf) on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website.

Studies [elsewhere](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16630376) have found connections between land clearing and malaria, although the particular mosquito species can vary.

Environmental health researcher [Jonathan Patz](http://www.sage.wisc.edu/people/patz/patz.html), one of the researchers on the Amazon analysis, says that environmental and health ministries in countries around the world need to collaborate on public health.

"If those ministries aren't working together, we'll never get to a sustainable solution… We'll only deal with the superficial problems and be reactionary as opposed to tackling the root causes," says Patz.